

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to bring to the attention of this House a serious problem that is facing our veterans.

While the Clinton administration is discussing, if not formalizing, the decision to send our men and women into Kosovo, they are not planning or formalizing plans on what will occur when they return home. For the third consecutive year, the Clinton administration has produced a budget that cuts veterans' funding. The administration is adding new programs and placing new burdens on the Veterans Administration while decreasing their budget.

The Veterans Administration budget has tremendous shortfalls in general health benefits, research grants for problems unique to our military veterans, and finally in burial benefits. Our veterans today are fortunate to even have a flag at their funeral let alone an honor guard. Over 50 percent of our national cemeteries are full or open only for cremation. Furthermore, only three new cemeteries are planned and with a 10-year window to open one, the problem of where our veterans are buried will only escalate in importance.

How does the Clinton administration plan to solve these problems? By cutting funding for our veterans, by taking researchers out of the lab and into patient care, by refusing to offer a credible short-term, midterm, or even long-term solution to burial issues.

As the Clinton administration continues to consider sending our men and women into harm's way, I call upon them to think about what they will do when they return home. Let's show some appreciation for their dedication and hard work by never again disgracing them with a budget like this.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. There being no further requests for morning hour debates, pursuant to clause 12, rule I, the House will stand in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 5 minutes p.m.) the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

When we think of people and their needs, we know we can offer our prayers for ourselves and for all people. When we see illness, we pray that You,

O God, would give renewed strength and make whole; when we see alienation or estrangement, we know that we can pray for Your gift of reconciliation and understanding; when we see wars or conflict, we pray that hostilities would ease and peace would reign; when we see a lack of spirit so that faith is not there and meaninglessness is widespread, then we pray, O God, give us hearts that are open to Your grace and Your love.

Bless us and all Your people this day we pray. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

STORAGE OF NUCLEAR WASTE AT EARTHQUAKE HOTBED IS STUPID

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, most of us see earthquakes in real tangible terms: A natural disaster, an unpredictable violent force of nature that mankind has been trying to predict, and outwit, for centuries. We see earthquakes as a cause of billions of dollars worth of structural destruction and the cause of death for untold thousands of people.

It seems now that the scientists over at the Department of Energy are seeing earthquakes in other terms. Now they are just "part of the plan," part of the plan to "hasten the process," I quote, to cover up high level nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain.

Folks, Yucca Mountain is the heart of 32 known earthquake faults, just hundreds of feet from our groundwater levels, and just miles away from the homes of thousands of Nevada residents. Boy, talk about con men and city slickers.

For the better part of a century, DOE has been trying desperately to fit a square peg in a round hole, knowing they are unable to develop structures that can withstand the crushing force of earthquakes. Now they are telling us they are trying to cash in on the de-

structive power of earthquakes. I guess that means that the mountain, when it collapses, will help coverup the waste. That is unbelievable.

Albert Einstein once said, "There are only two truly infinite things, the universe and stupidity. And I am unsure about the universe."

Mr. Speaker, to store nuclear waste at a hot bed of earthquakes in Nevada is stupidity, and I am doubly sure about that.

SOCIAL SECURITY MUST BE SAVED

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I join with those who maintain that we must save Social Security, we must save it for the 46,481 households in my district back in Illinois who currently receive it, and we must save it for the millions of workers and their families who need the economic security and protection which it provides.

Since its inception, Social Security has provided benefits to more than 160 million workers and their families. Without our Social Security system, half of the Nation's elderly would live in poverty. We must save Social Security for the unmarried and elderly widowed women who rely upon it for more than half of their income. There are over 53,000 female head of households with no husband present in my district alone.

Mr. Speaker, this is not the time to cut and experiment. We know what works, we know how it works, and we know why it works. Let us keep it working for all of the people.

AMERICANS KNOW BEST HOW TO SPEND THEIR OWN MONEY

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, as American taxpayers keep a steady eye on April 15, only 65 days away, many will notice that the \$500 per child tax credit passed by the Republican Congress in 1997 will make things a little easier this year.

For those with children, the pain of April 15 will be mitigated somewhat because the Republican Congress passed legislation allowing middle class families with children to keep a little bit more of what they earned.

Let us remember a key point that seems to be overlooked by those on the other side of the aisle: Washington did not "give" anything to millions of middle class families with children; Uncle Sam is merely allowing them to keep a little bit more of what already belongs to them.